

THE THIRD RECONSTRUCTION

Global Economic Decline and Reconciliation

by
Scott Holliday Wilson



One Dollar

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*Thank you to those who discussed these issues with me
and edited my work.*

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INTRODUCTION

In the next 20 years, world-changing economic and political events will develop and come to fruition in the United States and its colonies. American policies have expanded the military, political, and economic structure to such an extent that if America does not continue with a course of imperialism, especially economic in nature, then structural collapses are inevitable. Even if America decides to withdraw from countries it is occupying and/or economically controlling, a degree of collapse may still be imminent. Every empire reaches its demise, and the more the empire relies on foreign resources to control its economy, the greater the impact will be when the colonies rebel or the imperializing country recoils.

One would hope that the coming political changes would ensure equality and lead to more progressive changes instead of a continuation of the trend toward a reactionary atmosphere that clouds social development. The overwhelming reason that past attempts have been unsuccessful is the fragmentation of the lower classes, leading to an underdeveloped working class, which is manifested through the division of the races in the proletariat. Rapid technological advancements and natural societal progression should have prepared American workers for transformation into a more humane society. The obstacle creating the largest rift among workers is the division by race instead of the larger issue, which is class. This rift is magnified by Blacks who perceive whites to be interwoven with the system of oppression exclusive of class and ideological beliefs.

Achievements in the struggle for Black liberation and equality in the United States have always been preceded or accompanied by violence. The first major national struggle over this issue was intended to not only free Blacks from slavery, but also to eventually assimilate them into society as equals. The aspiration to create a more egalitarian society, which was initiated by Blacks and a handful of white politicians during the First Reconstruction following the Civil War, received too much resistance to be passed as law. Progressive laws were not enacted, and Blacks – though released from state-sanctioned slavery – continued to be subjected to social, economic and political discrimination. The problems therefore persisted, especially in the South, well past the time that was intended for Black adaptation into American or white society. As time elapsed following the breakdown of Reconstruction, white politicians and citizens rarely

fought for Black equality, and many Blacks excluded themselves from white society whenever possible. Black Codes and Jim Crow laws kept Blacks in a state of servitude that was nearly as bad as their existence under slavery.

The Second Reconstruction began with the Civil Rights Movement, and the more aggressive actions of the Black Power movement (Black Panther Party, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee). This struggle won for Blacks the right to vote and legally guaranteed them what they were intended to receive a century earlier. Although many people saw these accomplishments as a move toward a society that would guarantee the sought-after equality assured by the government, reconciliation between the races never happened.

Race is still prominent in our culture. The animosity that has built up between whites and Blacks related to housing, wages, welfare administration and job competition has created a society far from the ideal that many desired for hundreds of years. Our society and government have reinforced and acted as catalysts for racism and continue to do so. On almost all social and political issues, different ethnicities handle the solutions to their problems in different ways, and there are not many issues that they struggle for concurrently and in unison. If mass segregation and ideological incongruity persist, then the wedge between the races will be driven deeper when Americans have to come to terms with global economic fragmentation.

TOWARD THE FIRST RECONSTRUCTION

For reconciliation to occur between the races it is necessary to first understand the circumstances whereby Africans came to the United States, and why their situation is unique. Contrary to the current reasons for immigration, many immigrants in pre-colonial and colonial America did not arrive of their own volition. Englishmen who violated the law were given the option of incarceration or transportation to the New World. In later years, immigrants left their home country to avoid starvation, disease, political repression, religious persecution and other adversity. Despite the horrible circumstances upon which many Europeans left their homeland, it could not compare to the brutality that Africans experienced on their journey to America. Other minorities (i.e. Hispanics) within the American population cannot be evaluated concurrently since their

adaptation is unique unto itself and would have to be studied individually.

The world economic climate in the early 17th century was based almost exclusively on cultivating natural resources, whether they were crops or raw materials, and trading or sale of the goods manufactured from the resources. It was not uncommon for slaves or serfs to be part of society, especially in colonies in which developing scarce commodities resulted in large profits abroad. Initially whites and Native Americans were indentured servants, although for different reasons. The problem with enslaving these groups was that whites could escape and blend into a crowd and Indians knew the land far better than whites, so they could find their brothers and sisters easily.ⁱ The white and Native American servants also had no distinguishable characteristics that identified them with their servitude, so they were a costly endeavor that did not yield results.

The story behind the arrival of the original 20 Africans is not fully known, but what we do know is that they arrived in August of 1619 and did not emigrate freely or willingly.ⁱⁱ There is not sufficient information to decipher the country or countries from which the first "Black" Americans came, their preferred language, or any significant cultural customs. Therefore, when these 20 people arrived in America for the reasons of cheap labor and an identifiable characteristic (black skin), the Negro or African-American was born. These Africans were stripped of their identity, social status, language, and family and became simply Black. The creation of Black slavery solved the problem of escape. Black skin would ensure lifelong servitude with less disruption and chance of escape.

From the arrival of the first Africans in America until the last slave ship arrived in 1859, the economic system of the South became more and more reliant on slavery as a staple for production. The general consensus was that slavery in the Southern states was necessary to be competitive in the production of cotton, tobacco and other crops; therefore there was no moral obligation and nothing inherently wrong with it. The necessity of the economic benefits justified the institution throughout the United States. Since the federal government supported slavery, humanizing the Africans was unnecessary. They were a commodity, property, a tool to increase production not unlike an ox or a plow. They were below the lowest class in white society and treated accordingly.

One would assume that color was the determining factor of prejudice towards Blacks because of the post-slavery race-based

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hostilities in America. However, it was not color but social status. Color was used to determine social status, but social status was used to justify the brutal treatment. If whites and Native Americans could have been enslaved successfully, then their treatment would have been the same. Toward the end of the 18th century, Americans were marrying racially mixed women (ethnic origins split between Europe and Africa) in San Domingo (Haiti). At a time in America when the vast majority of intimate contact between whites and Blacks was forced, white men were marrying women of color in San Domingo. Since racially mixed women were generally in the middle-class of San Domingo society, race was not a deterrent for American men. The stigma of color could not flourish when so many Negroes and Mulattos filled the highest positions in the country.ⁱⁱⁱ

George Washington believed strongly that once Black people acquired skills useful to the southern environment, acquired a sound economic base, bought homes and became law-abiding citizens of the community, the whites would accept them as first-class citizens.^{iv} This shows evidence for the idea that color was not the overwhelming issue that led to discrimination in the early 1800s. Free Black assimilation into American culture had the same criteria as any other group of immigrants according to Washington. If the slaves were freed before the entire Southern economic system was based on the exploitation of their labor, then their integration into American society would have been a transition comparable to the Irish or the Italians. There would have been hostilities over job competition as other ethnicities experienced, but the persistent discrimination would not have intensified to the level it did during Reconstruction, provided that the government did not institutionalize racism and segregation.

THE FIRST RECONSTRUCTION AND AFTERMATH

The federal government did not outlaw slavery until 1863, and the law was not based on morality but strategy. President Abraham Lincoln initially thought that a viable solution might be to send Black slaves to Africa or South America, but this idea was dismissed; only through the application of this plan via Liberia did we realize how potentially disastrous his proposition was. Lincoln then decided another course for the slaves, which was beneficial to the North. The fastest way to win the war was for Lincoln to pronounce the freedom of all slaves (except in the border-states that did not secede), which would be an impetus for Black recruitment into the Union army.

The real problems did not end with the resolution of the Civil War, but only intensified during Reconstruction following the war. The Southern economy was based on the institution of cheap labor through slavery. The question on every plantation owner's mind was who is going to work our land and how much is it going to cost us? Appeasing both the landowners and the abolitionists and Blacks was not easy for the government. Following the death of Lincoln, Congress was in a quagmire over the degree to which Blacks should be assimilated into society; their civil rights, land, and potential occupations were of the utmost importance. Left-wing white politicians and Blacks introduced plans to redistribute land and immediately give Blacks the right to vote. Coupled with the right to hold office, these measures had the possibility of diminishing hostilities between social classes and begin the slow process of improving relations.

The white Southern answer to the proposed social improvements was hostility and disgust. The landowners were not willing to part with any piece of their land to compensate Blacks for their centuries of servitude; without land, Blacks could not be incorporated into society as equals. Since the landowners controlled the economy in the South, the federal government was obliged to follow their instructions. Ultimately, aristocratic whites became embedded in the local governments and began directing the terms of Reconstruction.

President Andrew Johnson allowed the former Confederate states to handle the issue as they saw fit instead of involving the federal government; former slave owners still controlled free Blacks and much remained unchanged. In 1865, Johnson allowed states to develop Black Codes, which institutionalized racism and ended all possibilities of a fair society for Blacks. South Carolina's Code required Blacks to pay between \$10 and \$100 if they wanted to follow a career other than servant or farmer, which was a major setback for Black artisans.^v These discriminatory state laws are the reason that future discrimination would be based on race and class instead of simply class. The state-sponsored laws against Blacks altered the working class focus on social reform or revolution and instead created competition and animosity between races by keeping Blacks in servitude despite their alleged freedom. The federal government compounded this problem by allowing states the right to enact laws that were not simply beneficial for the rich, but for the whites.

Blacks and whites alike are Americans and must stand up to the structure that has damned them to repression.

It is imperative to reverse this feeling of apathy towards the government. Currently, choices are fairly limited because of the two-party structure, and although it is not wrong to desire and participate in small incremental changes, there also must be mutual struggles for the upcoming changes which will be on a much larger scale. The Third Reconstruction's impetus is the changing world economic climate, and it is the responsibility of all American citizens to initiate reconciliation. Inactivity will be detrimental to the minorities and civil liberties. A cohesive working-class movement must be formed to voice the true desires of Americans when faced with these monumental changes. The Third Reconstruction can lead back to slavery or to a promising future free of racial discrimination. The future of race relations is in the hands of all Americans and therein lies the responsibility.

ⁱ Bennett, L., Jr. *Before the Mayflower*. Pg. 45

ⁱⁱ Bennett, L., Jr. *Before the Mayflower*. Pg. 29

ⁱⁱⁱ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins*. Pg. 248

^{iv} Ture, K. *Black Power*. Pg. 126

^v Foner, E. *A Short History of Reconstruction*. Pg. 93

^{vi} Foner, E. *A Short History of Reconstruction*. Pg. 74

^{vii} Foner, E. *A Short History of Reconstruction*. Pg. 169

^{viii} Bennett, L., Jr. *Before the Mayflower*. Pg. 269

^{ix} Foner, P.S. *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877*. Pg. 155

^x Foner, E. *A Short History of Reconstruction*. Pg. 246

^{xi} Trotsky, L. *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, Pg. 44

^{xii} Massey, D.S. & Denton, N.A. *American Apartheid*. Pg. 28

^{xiii} Dunayevskaya, R. *The Industrialization of the Negro*. Pg. 4

^{xiv} Carrell, M.R. & Heavrin, C. *Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining*. Pg. 26

^{xv} Massey, D.S. & Denton, N.A. *American Apartheid*, Pg. 51

^{xvi} Cashin, S. *The Failures of Integration*. Pg. 115

^{xvii} Ogbur, J.O. *Black Power*. Pg. 98

^{xviii} Wikipedia Contributors. Pg. 2

^{xix} Massey, D.S. & Denton, N.A. *American Apartheid*. Pg. 104

killing civilians, bringing in American corporations and exploiting their people. If we wanted to root out all evil in the world, we would first have to destroy our own system for the way in which we have treated our own citizens, especially Blacks. When the United States bombs foreign countries and plunges them into poverty, it is not the evil that is being killed, but other workers, neighbors and families. Of course, for America to continue as the only world power, the wars will proceed. The only exception would be if foreign countries supply the United States with their natural resources without intimidation.

Due to the immediacy of the situation in America, workers will need to correct the current conflicts between the races through mutual struggle over the next decades. It is no small feat to attain, but Americans must at least begin the process of reversing the chauvinistic and reclusive nature between whites and Blacks and begin engaging in common struggles. Although Americans are some of the most individualistic people in the world, there are still common struggles in which we can collaboratively participate. Racism has been initiated and upheld by the government over the years through the economic system: first it was slavery, then institutional racism, and now wage slavery. To alleviate the animosity created by "differences" between races, the economic system must be engaged and changed by heterogeneous participation. Through acts of discrimination, whether institutional or personal, the false pretense of race has divided workers, and only through the reversal of these trends can unity be achieved. This proves to be even more difficult under the current circumstances because of America's transformation from an industrial country to one based on service, but there are still opportunities to engage the white power structure within a service-based country. It is necessary to find these instances and take advantage of them at every opportunity. Instead of an individual attempting to stand up to discriminatory employers alone, others must sacrifice and stand up too. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the National Labor Relations Board have procrastinated and been inefficient in handling workers' complaints, making those agencies unreliable and panderers to corporate interests. Only heterogeneous groups of rank-and-file workers can begin the process of reconciliation in the workplace.

The repercussions of working-class stagnation on racial issues will lead to regressive governmental actions after the culmination of world events leading to the inevitable demise of the American empire.

Instead of promoting Black self-sufficiency, states and the federal government began taking steps to ensure economic servitude. The Freedman's Bureau, an organization that was intended to incorporate newly freed Blacks into society, chose to appease white landowners. Despite providing moderate advancements in education, the Bureau was disastrous. Bureau agents, Black and white, made every effort to induce low country freedmen to sign contracts with their former owners, while federal troops forcibly evicted those who refused.^{vi} One must wonder why the government was making efforts to keep in good favor with men and women who were responsible for seceding from the union and initiating the Civil War, instead of American families who were enslaved for centuries.

Throughout the First Reconstruction the government was responsible for creating conditions in which racism could exist and flourish. The general trend from the end of the First Reconstruction in 1880, to the beginning of the Second Reconstruction in the 1950s, was state-sponsored discrimination against Blacks and racist laws that kept the races from forming long-lasting alliances within the working class. The federal government continued to pass laws that favored whites, discouraged organizing between the races, and allowed prominent whites within states to dictate Black living conditions.

POST-RECONSTRUCTION LABOR

Reconstruction eroded into the Second Industrial Revolution, which was characterized by an increase in the urban labor force, low wages and a lack of job security. The country was in a deep, long-lasting recession following Reconstruction due to a decrease in Southern crop production and an increase in low-paid urban industrial workers. Slaves, who produced nine-tenths of the South's cotton crop in 1860, grew only sixty percent in 1876 as free men.^{vii} Plantation owners throughout the South had to compensate for the abolition of slavery, which led to further discrimination against the working class and the first coalitions between Black and white workers. The upper class enacted legislation that blatantly favored planters at the expense of poor whites and Blacks, which moved them into a close alliance.^{viii} These common struggles exposed the federal and state governmental systems as the true initiators of racism.

In 1877, there was growing discontent over issues such as the length of the workday, wages and nationalization of the railroad. Workers from the Atlantic to the Pacific participated in railroad strikes

that spread to other industries, and St. Louis experienced the first general strike in American history. The great significance of the uprising was the cohesive class struggle involving Black and white leaders working as a class instead of separate races. Labor unions had not yet gained a significant number of members, which made the strikes a concerted effort by rank-and-file workers absent of future union bureaucracy. Blacks and whites alike began realizing that America's future might lie in a system much different from the two-party "democratic" institution that had been in control since the nation's inception. A significant event that showed this feeling was in Cincinnati, where Peter H. Clark gave the first widely publicized speech by a Black American proposing socialism.^{ix} Many of the individual strikes were successful, and the uprising of 1877 united the races of the working-class in a common struggle. Reconciliation seemed to be a possibility in urban settings for a short period following the strikes. At the very least, workers of all colors were beginning to understand that the problems were inherently in the system, not the opposing race. Unfortunately, the system is much harder to defeat than the other race. The General Strike revealed the political power and collective consciousness of the urban middle and upper classes, which joined with municipal authorities and veterans' organizations to form "citizen militias" to do battle with the strikers.^x

Federal and state governments worked in unison with the upper and middle classes throughout the late 19th and early to mid-20th century to guarantee that competition between the races impeded their development as a centralized working class. In 1919, the employers of a Chicago meatpacking plant initiated a race riot. Some time before the riot actually broke out, the Black and white meatpackers had struck and paraded through the Black quarter, with the population cheering whites in the same way that they cheered the Blacks.^{xi} A series of riots throughout the 1910s and 1920s showed that the government had gained the advantage over the working class. The stigma of race was beginning to develop and create competition that benefited the employers. Poor rural blacks with little understanding of industrial conditions and no experience with unions were recruited in the south and transported directly to northern factories as replacement workers and strike-breakers, often on special trains arranged by factory owners.^{xii} At this point, labor unions should have been the voice of inclusion that guided workers to a promising future through unity between the races. Unfortunately, most unions excluded workers based on gender, race, and certain trade-skills. The Industrial

drop the case unless he/she has a significant amount of time and money to spend. The employer has all the power and can routinely discriminate without fear of repercussions. Because of the inefficiency of these laws, the working class will eventually discover its own unique ways of changing the system, as did the Blacks during the Second Reconstruction.

THE THIRD RECONSTRUCTION: PREPARATION AND REPERCUSSIONS

The time has come in which workers should focus their dissatisfaction with society not against each other but against the machine that has made them hate and violently compete against their own brothers and sisters. Although it is common to hear that competition is good for economic progress, rather it is positive for business and especially large corporations at the expense of workers. The result of competition among workers has been corporate (previously landowner) control leading to slavery, institutional racism and discrimination. This philosophy is then projected onto the masses leading them to focus on petty differences concealing common interests.

Structural collapses within the American political and economic system are imminent due to the demands of maintaining an empire. There are fewer and fewer countries willing to continue long-lasting relationships with the United States unless the cooperating country's political system is relatively right-wing, and the politicians along with the corporations that control natural resources are benefiting directly from American control. The trend away from American control of foreign natural resources can be seen through the nationalization of industries throughout South America. America is still the premier world power with an arsenal of nuclear weapons, which leads citizens to the perception that cooperation between America and its "allies" is enduring and stable. However, it is intimidation and foreign upper-class greed that maintains these relationships. As these relations deteriorate so will the economic control of foreign countries. If there is no active effort to place a politician with "American interests" in power in foreign countries, then there will be more wars and oppression, assuming that economic control is still desired by the United States.

The government is hypocritical by explaining that we must stomp out forms of evil throughout the world by military invasion,

applies these stipulations to employment. By default, the passage of this act also immediately outlawed Jim Crow laws and eliminated any existing Black Codes. Technically, after this law passed, equality between the races should have been assured for the first time, but this change would have taken the commitment of government officials and citizens alike. Not one Southern Republican voted for this bill and fewer than 10 percent of Southern Democrats supported it.^{xviii} Since the Southern representatives did not endorse this bill, many employers in the South could ignore it. To be effective, the system also had to successfully root out instances of discrimination that would appear continuously until racism was not seen as divisive.

The protections provided within the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were extended to housing in 1968. Although it was a legal breakthrough as was the original act of 1964, the problem of Black urban poverty was deep-seated and irreversible without additional legislation. The test of time has proved this. Currently, the severity of housing discrimination is such that Blacks are systematically shown, recommended, and invited to inspect many fewer homes than comparably qualified whites.^{xix}

As slaves were technically free after the Emancipation Proclamation, Blacks were technically equal after the Civil Rights Acts. Unfortunately, the law's provisions have little bearing on its application and enforcement, let alone the reconciliation among average Americans. Although the Second Reconstruction was successful in terms of Blacks gaining equal status by law, the races were still segregated; whites were afforded more opportunities, and race was more important for alliances than class. The animosity between the races had never been corrected, and groups that advocated Black Power made middle-class whites fearful and working-class whites competitive. For the civil rights legislation to ensure equal opportunities, the agencies enforcing the law have to be impartial and immediate. This system has been so ineffective that many workers will not even file complaints when they feel that they have been discriminated against.

It has been more than 40 years since Blacks gained the right to vote and were afforded equal opportunities in employment, yet fewer Blacks vote in each election compared to other ethnicities, and discrimination still exists in the workplace. More importantly, the agencies enforcing anti-discrimination laws are inefficient, and when discrimination complaints are filed, they take far too long before they make it to court. This forces the employee to find other work and

Workers of the World, on a revolutionary class-based platform, was the only union whose membership in the Black community was proportionate to their population. At the height of its power, the IWW claimed one million members, 100,000 of whom were black.^{xiii} The employing class in collusion with the government realized that to gain the highest productivity from the working class, they must create competition between two or more groups. Despite the fact that Black and white workers had much more in common with each other than they did with government officials and their employers, competition between the races intensified as did chauvinism and opportunism.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK POWER

While the races were vying for jobs during the Great Depression, the federal government passed two acts that were an achievement exclusively for the white labor force. The Social Security Act (1935) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938) exemplified institutional racism. The Social Security Act was established to provide benefits for retirees, but agricultural and domestic workers were exempt. Because of the legality of racial discrimination in hiring and the continued existence of Black Codes in some states, Black workers were punished by the government for jobs that they were obligated to perform. The Fair Labor Standards Act established the 40-hour workweek, overtime regulations, a federal minimum wage and the abolition of child labor under the age of 16.^{xiv} Although monumental in its achievements, this act also did not apply to agricultural and domestic workers. These acts were accepted upon the condition that Southern Democrats attach an addendum excluding the compulsory Black professions in their jurisdiction. A competitive race-based system evolved, dissolving opportunities for mutual struggles.

Blacks also received iniquitous treatment outside of the workplace. Discrimination became the norm in housing because of federal laws passed in the 1930s and 40s. These laws led to isolated Black communities. With the passage of housing acts in the 1930s and the creation of the Federal Housing Authority and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, the government imposed the use of red-lining. Red-lining, a practice institutionalized by HOLC^{xv}, required the classification of city districts into one of four categories according to their risk and ethnic makeup to determine who would receive loans

toward their mortgage. The white, affluent sections of town received the majority of the loans while the Black and working-class sections did not. Naturally the Black sections were the lowest on the FHA and HOLC classification lists. Since Blacks could not attain loans to purchase property in the highest-rated sections of town, their neighborhoods became devalued, crime-ridden and inescapable. Red-lining ultimately segregated the races exclusive of class and had the potential to keep Blacks in a constant state of poverty in slums.

The Housing Act of 1949 encouraged the large-scale demolition of slums and stipulated that displaced residents could only purchase new homes as single owners. Almost no Black could afford this because of unequal opportunities in education and location, forcing them to rely on purchasing multi-family homes. The FHA also discouraged bank loans to Blacks, which pushed them outside the city limits leading to exclusively white sections. Concentrated black poverty – the form of segregation that has had perhaps the most enduring impact in creating inequality – was a government creation.^{xvi} More importantly, there were fewer opportunities for the working-class masses of all ethnicities to interact, integrate and organize resistance to the system that had made them enemies.

THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION

In the 1930s and 1940s, white resistance to civil rights legislation demonstrated their lack of commitment to equality. Segregation prevailed during the Depression and World War II, and many issues were put on the back burner. An increase in nationalism to gain support for the war and end German and Japanese aggression were much more important to America than a dispossessed class and/or race. Since they could not work within the system because they lacked political representation, Blacks formed their own unique forms of resistance to the power structure. The new tactics that Blacks utilized to change existing structures within the white American system consisted of non-traditional means, which were manifested through their intense distrust of the federal and state governments, many whites, police, and the existing Black institutions that pandered to wealthy citizens instead of the working-class.

Peaceful resistance was practiced to bring attention to an assortment of causes, from voting to segregation to Black Nationalism. Organizations also were formed that were militant and pointed racism towards whites publicly for the first time on a national

level. Peaceful protest was not overtly offensive to the white masses and even attractive to progressive whites, whereas Blacks bearing arms and treating the white apparatus as their "nigger" caused reactionary feelings among whites concerning the aspirations of Black Power. White supremacy was ingrained in American culture and tradition to such an extent that Black Power, pride and independence were perceived as extremism. Known racists and segregationists were entrenched in the government throughout the United States during the Second Reconstruction, contributing to the suppression of the Black vote and segregation (John Patterson, George Wallace, Ross Barnett, and Strom Thurmond for example). But when Black Power leaders came out against the "white system" (Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Huey Newton, and Bobby Seale for example), they were considered racists promoting hatred. The Black Power groups obviously were not comparable to the white apparatus. White officials controlled the system of oppression, whereas Blacks were the victims. Therefore Blacks were in no position to intimidate whites on a national level. The significance is demonstrated by the governmental treatment of these two groups. The white segregationists were supported and involved in governmental decisions influencing millions of people (whether state or otherwise), while the Black leaders were investigated, jailed and even murdered.

Although Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr. and peaceful activists are seen as the leaders of the movement towards civil rights reform, the threat of violence from more militant voices such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers in the mid to late 1960s was equally important in passing legislation. The Civil Rights movement was not as threatening to the white power structure as the Black Power movement was; the NAACP and King were willing to wait and work hard for changes while Black Power had certain immediacy to it. The Black Panther Party excited the working-class spirit in the Black ghettos, promoting socialism and the class struggle. There was a clear valorization of toughness that Panthers saw as inherently absent from the middle class, which has been "softened" by affluence.^{xvii} The behavior of the Panthers scared the white public and the system and expedited the passage of such legislation.

The efforts of peaceful and militant Black resistance groups were rewarded with the passage of civil rights acts in 1964 and 1968. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, creed, national origin and color. The most important part of the act for the working-class is Title VII, which